Brush management

This practice usually involves the removal of woody species within woodlands that are invasive and/or have negatively affected production, growth or regeneration in the existing stand. Mechanical and/or chemical application is used to remove the existing plants and prevent new growth. After the problematic species has been removed native trees have a chance to grow and thrive.

Fence

The addition of a fence is needed where pasture land or grazing areas adjoin woodland. By excluding livestock the forest flora can thrive and it allows seedlings to be regenerated. Livestock can be harmful to productive woodlands by compacting the soil and damaging roots thereby causing poor growth and leaving the trees stressed, which can lead to disease. The minimum accepted fencing is a five–strand barbed wire fence.

Tree and Shrub Planting

Permanently converting crop land or pasture land to woodland. Tree species are selected based on the soil and long term objectives of the landowner.

USDA NRCS

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Forest Conservation Management

Photo Courtesy: Obiora Embry

Managing brush in forest to sustain biodiversity

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the the State Forestland Initiative under Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a financial–assistance program that provides resources to help landowners manage crop, pasture, wildlife and forest lands.

In order to achieve your objectives whether it is wildlife habitat, timber production or economic sustainability; it is important to have a written forest management plan. The plan outlines the strategy. documents goals for managing forest resources, it can keep track of achievements and provide strategies for other land uses.

Forest Management Benefits

- Improves quality and quantity of timber
- Reduces soil erosion
- Improves water quality
- Provides wildlife habitat
- Sequesters carbon in the soil
- Increases energy source of biomass
- Reduces forest health risk of pests and invasive species

Eligibility

To be eligible for the EQIP Conservation Activity Plan–Forest Management (CAP-FM) landowners must have existing land dedicated to providing habitat for wildlife or timber production.

Forest Inventory

Contact a professional forester or consultant to create a forest inventory. An inventory is extremely important to determine the management strategies to reach the goals and objectives of the landowner. Based on this information the landowner and the forester are able to make recommendations for thinning, pruning, and harvesting to maintain the desired production or wildlife habitat objectives.

Forest Conservation Management Plan

One method of obtaining a Conservation Activity Plan–Forest Management (CAP–FM) is to apply at your local NRCS office. Upon approval, select a NRCS Technical Service Provider (TSP) who will create that plan using:

- Analyses of past management activities
- Existing and planned forest resource conditions including soil, water, site index, stand quality and health, and stocking level objectives and existing resources

Common EQIP — Forestland Initiative practices recommended by a TSP include:

- Forest slash treatment
- Firebreaks
- Prescribed burning
- Riparian forest buffers
- Forest stand improvement (FSI)
- Brush management
- Fence
- Tree and shrub planting

The chosen practice(s) have to be approved to be used for CAP–FM. Upon approval and the specifications within the contract have been met and approved by NRCS the landowner will receive funding—the upfront costs are paid by the landowner. The treatment(s) specified within the contract can be completed by the landowner or a private consulting forester.

Most common EQIP – Forestland Initiative practices used

Forest stand improvement (FSI)

This practice is usually recommended to alleviate overcrowding and give more space to remaining trees to grow. The trees to be removed will be marked and removed by mechanical and/or chemical means. This process may be repeated periodically in the same stand to produce trees that will be harvested. This practice can also be used to improve wildlife habitat to allow trees to produce more fruit or nuts for wildlife food.